



FROM THE

PINEYWOODS

Volume 2, Number 2
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Conserving the Pineywoods

Newsletter of the Pineywoods Cattle Registry & Breeders

Why Conserve? Part I

by Justin Pitts

At the recent joint meeting of the American Land Breed Conservancy (ALBC) and Cracker Cattle Association, a gentleman approached me and asked the following question, "Other than keeping a few around for the sake of heritage, why keep these old cattle? What good are they?" This man was looking at the economics of the commercial cattle business as opposed to what he perceived to be sentimentality. Many of the breeds we now fight to save are looked on with disdain in the commercial arena that is forever changing. I've been told by some that the only reason we keep Pineywoods cattle is because they are pretty and looks don't count in the real world. Just go to any local stockyard and watch the sale and soon you will see that anything black will bring more than other colors of cattle regardless of whether the non-black animal is of better quality. Thou hypocrite!

Now back to my original questions: why do we keep them other than heritage or historical value? Here are my top reasons.

1. **Disease resistance.** I've never treated or lost a Pineywoods to anaplasmosis, a disease that tends to be a problem here in the Coastal Plains.
2. **Parasite resistance.** These cattle are resistant to various forms of internal parasites such as brown stomach worms.
3. **Fertility.** Most Pineywoods are fertile at a young age and will consistently, under decent range conditions, produce a calf annually.
4. **Longevity.** Not only are they fertile at a young age, the majority will annually produce a calf well into their late teens and some even into their mid-to-late twenties, with most rebreeding within 30-60 days. Since your greatest expense is replacement heifers, it pays to keep cattle that are long-lived.

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Justin Pitts, auctioneer; David Ozborn, PCRBA President, Jennifer Ozborn

Pineywoods Cattle Registry and Breeder's Association.

3643 Hwy. 18 Brandon, Miss. 39042

First Annual Cattle Auction

The first Pineywoods cattle sale was a resounding success with 74 head being sold and eight new members joining. Despite the inclement weather the sale was well attended and overall the cattle brought a fair price. Mr. Randy Dutiell of Brandon, Mississippi, purchased the top selling bull calf.

Many thanks to the volunteers who assisted in loading, unloading, and penning the cattle for without you, the sale would have been impossible. A special note to all: those boys who volunteered to help aren't members of the Pineywoods Cattle Registry and Breeders Association (PCRBA) but were there because members of their family have been breeders of these cattle for generations. Again, we offer a very special thanks to you all for your help. Thanks to the Live Oak Rifles SCV camp for preparing and serving the fine barbeque. These

boys always do a fine job in both cooking and preserving their heritage. The PCRBA would like to offer a special thanks to Mr. Thomas Allen of Dallas, Texas for the generous donation of the Woods bull to be sold with the proceeds going to the PCRBA. Thanks again, Mr. Allen, for your generosity.

Many new herds were started at the sale and for those of us already in the PCRBA, we need to offer them all the assistance we can. It was great to see so many people interested in preserving and promoting these fine cattle. Cattle were sold as far away as Terlton, Oklahoma and interest is growing. Already the PCRBA has been contacted to see when the next sale is and if there are any available cattle available for sale now.

Dr. Bonnie Fritz of Georgia agreed to edit the newsletter, taking the reins from member David James, appreciated for his efforts and fine job of starting the newsletter. The form and format have been

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Pineywoods History 101

The breed dates back hundreds of years to the first Spanish fleets that put cattle out to provide ready meat for the voyage home. Families began to keep and breed herds of Pineywoods cattle all through the Coastal Plains of the Deep South, the area known as the Pine Barrens or commonly called the Piney Woods. Indigenous to this region was a species of pine called Yellow Pine, Longstraw, or Longleaf. Under this canopy of pines grew a variety of grasses that were excellent forage for livestock. Silkgrass, Big Bluestem, Little Bluestem, and carpet grass were found in abundance and stock thrived in the New World. J.F.H. Claiborne wrote of the vast herds and flocks found in Perry County, Mississippi in the 1840's when he toured the region studying its culture. Much of what he saw and wrote about remained as part of this region's agricultural scene until very recently. What became known as "government pasture" or "company woods" herders used extensively until the last decade when pressure from hunters was applied to have the cattle and other stock removed from these wooded areas. Government pastures were areas set aside to keep the last of the yellow pines from being cut out and company woods were areas owned or maintained by timber companies. Now, ten to fifteen years later, you hear comments from the hunters that the woods are so grown up you can't get through them anymore. Like Europe learned of the value of cats that kept down rats that brought the Bubonic Plague too late, we face the same danger.

I can't say enough about the fine folks in Florida who work so diligently to preserve the environment and their agricultural heritage. They have an excellent video out on managing woodlands and the many benefits of keeping these areas grazed. Contact Mr. Stephen Monroe at 407 South Calhoun Street, the Mayo Building, Room 333, and Tallahassee, Florida 32399 to see about obtaining a copy.



Heifer sold at the Pineywoods auction

First Annual Cattle Auction

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patterned after the ALBC newsletter with which some of you are already familiar. As members of PCRBA, we value your input and ask that you take the time to contact us with ideas, questions, or concerns. All we ask is that it be



Bull sold at the Pineywoods auction 11-20-04

newsletter will be a tool to build our association and a tool for you to either sell or purchase Woods cattle. We are currently working on a Woods cattle brochure and any advice or technical help would be appreciated.

All donations of time, money, or whatever you have to offer would be invaluable to the PCRBA. All monies raised are put right back to work promoting and educating the public about Woods cattle and the more successful we are in promoting these cattle, the less likely they are to become extinct. Remember you don't have to own cattle to be a member and every member counts. Promote these cattle by purchasing beef from breeders who have it available and serve it to family and friends. Talk about these cattle with neighbors, friends, co-workers, and anyone else who may be interested in conservation of rare breeds but don't own cattle. Take care and God bless.

FROM THE EDITOR

I'm new at this and would like to hear from you. You can call, write, or e-mail me at Bonnie Fritz, 795 Cape Road, Carnesville, Georgia 30521, Telephone: 404-314-3020, E-mail: bfritz@gsu.edu.

My husband Bill and I got into the Pineywoods world through our friend and partner Dr. Jaima Youngblood, a farmer, dog-trainer, and geneticist. Jaima lured the rest of us, her husband Doug Moore, Bill and me, to Laurel MS with tales of endangered, exotic, loveable,

and profitable Pineywoods cows. She was right. We purchased nine head in all (shown on the masthead) and would have bought more had we known then.... Anyway, we now make up the *Fritz-Moore Pineywoods Cattlemen Association of NE Georgia*. Justin Pitts launched a mega fence-building project at our ranch, *Hudson River Landing Farm*, while the herd grew fat on hay in Jaima's paddock. Our forester came to check on the pine trees this week and is thrilled to have an outfit open to what he calls "Agriforestry," which calls for a completely different forest management system. Jaima also nominated me for this job, which so far has been fun. Some regular features suggested are listed below. Please add your own, either topics or text. I take e-mail attachments, handwritten or typed, and phone called submissions—you send the info, I edit and publish!

1. David James' family name breed articles.
2. Funny or interesting stories you have about your Pineywoods cattle.
3. Letters to the editor.
4. Classified ads for buying and selling.
5. Back porch vet tips for raising cattle.
6. Breeder tips such as raising, selling, promoting, and learning what will keep these critters fenced in?

Why Conserve?

(Continued from pg. 1)

5. Mothering ability. Today we now have as many or perhaps more predators than we did when these cattle arrived on this continent and anyone who has raised Pineywoods will attest the tend to business when it comes to their calves. I've seen them stomp, paw, hook, and even lay down on animals attacking their babies. Also most are good to excellent milkers.

6. Foragers. Pineywoods cows will browse and graze on species of plants that other cattle would starve before eating.

7. Heterosis. Cross a Pineywoods with other breeds and watch that calf grow! My favorite cross is either an

Angus or a low birth weight Charolais. With these two breeds you generally "hide" the spots while weaning a heavier calf. Again those buying at the stockyards go for looks. Some of the highest priced steers I ever sold were pale yellow steers out of Yellow Griffin Pineywoods. I guess they thought they were Charolais crossed.

8. Efficiency. You can keep more Pineywoods cows on acreage that would carry fewer of the synthetic breeds (my pet name for all these hybrids).

Would you rather sell one calf for \$525.00 or two for \$450.00 each with lower production per cows? Now that isn't to say that the Pineywoods can't give the other breeds a run for their money when out crossed. My father generally breeds his Pineywoods to commercial bulls and his cows will wean as heavy or heavier a calf than his synthetic cows. If the spots are hidden, they will bring the same price as the others.

Now, having said all this, anyone with just a little bit of objectivity would be willing to give the old girls a try. I say unabashedly that I am not objective regarding the Pineywoods but am unequivocally biased towards them. They've been here long enough to have proven their worth. When talking with this gentleman I encouraged him to try four or five of these cows and then let me know what he thought when he sold his first crop of calves. The proof of the pudding is in the eating thereof.

requirements would not survive. The Pineywoods region contains acidic soils that just do not promote rapid growth of anything and therefore the cattle adapted to it. Stop and think for a moment. Had the Pineywoods and Cracker cattle been pampered and selectively bred such as other breeds have over the past one hundred years, they would be just like any of these other breeds: dependent on man for survival. J. Frank Doby, in his book *The Longhorns*, mentioned that when turned out on native Texas range, the show ring Hereford within two generations did not resemble the original animals turned out but had an entirely different conformation. Adapt or die. Stop and

. The Genetics of Land Races: What to Know when Breeding

By Dr. Jaima Youngblood

Breeding Land Races: Form and Function

Pineywoods cattle initially self-selected for keeping ability and survivability. As caretakers of this endangered breed, we need to be aware of the basic foundation traits that count in maintaining them with their survivability traits intact.

This does not mean that the breeder

cannot select for more beefy conformation, but it does mean we should not throw out the baby with the bathwater.

Pineywoods flourished under hot, humid conditions with poor quality forage and browse. They were precocious for early sexual maturity, good milking ability, and fierce mothering ability. A real concern is that if the primary criteria for breeding Pineywoods cattle are current beef conformation standards, the breed may



Fritz-Moore Georgia herd

think again. These "new and improved" breeds are really just a landrace from some other part of the world and have been really well fed, which is why they look so impressive. If those who turned their backs on the Pineywoods and Cracker Cattle for other breeds had treated them the way they treat the imports, what a difference there would have been. Only when the scrub was bulldozed and imported grasses planted and fertilized did these synthetic breeds thrive. By contrast, the "old scrub cow" made it the best way she could and still turned a profit, something that can't be said for the land grant institutions' methods of producing catso prevalent today.

In the next issue of the newsletter, I'll address additional points of interest about the natural and historical value of Pineywoods. If you have any questions, please send them to "Ask Justin."

To be continued in the next newsletter.

deteriorate to the status of common crossbred cattle. What, specifically, are Pineywoods good for and how are they different from other breeds? What traits allowed them to survive capably in a geographic area that historically has been a challenge for most species, native and introduced?

Heading the list of Pineywoods inherent desirable traits is survivability through utilizing forage/browse that is of low quality and that is available only through much searching and covering ground. They were able to sustain themselves and reproduce in an environment that was too difficult for other types of cattle. When many of the British beef breeds were introduced to local Southern and Gulf Coast

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Membership Matters

By Bonnie Fritz
Directory

PCRBA would like to collect information from you to start a membership directory that includes some of the following information. Please send me any of the information below that you would like included. For those of us who are mail challenged, I may be calling if we don't hear from you.

1. Name
2. Address
3. Phone
4. Fax
5. E-mail
6. A word about your PW: family line, breeding base, and specialty:
7. How long have you been into breeding PW?
8. Why or how did you get into breeding?
9. Pictures.

List of Officers

President: David Ozborn (term expires '05);
Vice President Jess Brown ('05);
Secretary David D. James ('06);
Treasurer David Ozborn ('08)
Board of Directors:
 Pierre Johnson ('05)
 Billy Frank Brown ('06)
 Justin Pitts ('07)
Newsletter Editor Bonnie Fritz.

Note: If you can't get in touch with a member of the Association, please contact Bonnie Fritz at 795 Cape Road, Carnesville, Georgia 30521; 404-314-3020; bfritz@gsu.edu.

Calendar of Events

April 2005 PCRBA Meeting. The next PCRBA meeting will be held on the 3rd Saturday in April at Billy Frank Brown's in Poplarville, Mississippi, 601-795-4672. You will receive an update with directions.

The Genetics of Land Races

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areas, they and their crossbred offspring did not do as well in handling the poor forage, the parasites (both endo- and exo-) and do as well in handling the poor forage, the parasites (both endo- and exo-) and the predator species (including man)

The same result still occurs when Pineywoods are crossbred to the European breeds. Yes, the crossbreds gain more quickly.... if exposed to higher quality feeds, improved pastures. Yes, they look more like the kind of beef animal the cattle buyers like. And hybridizing Pineywoods herds for sale purposes may be more valuable to a producer in the short run. Yes, most of our Pineywoods do live on improved pasture and are fed on higher quality forage than that for which they were selected. But we need to remember that modernization can be a double-edged sword, to routinely examine our herds for keeping ability, and to breed those animals that best retain the unique Pineywoods traits.

In other words, form follows function in Pineywoods cattle. And if we are to perpetuate some of the most desirable traits without losing salability, we need to be aware how these traits translate for today's conservators and breed accordingly.

Hints from the Back 40.

Please send useful bits you glean from the fields. This Hint comes from Georgia breeder Bill Fritz.

Agriforestry. When my forester heard that we were planning to run our herd of Pineywoods in our pine tree crop, he changed his entire approach to our forest management. Instead of keeping the canopy thick to screen out sunlight and prevent undergrowth, we will thin the treetops, letting in more light for stronger healthier trees and let the herd take care of the undergrowth and provide fertilizer as well. Another win-

Classifieds

Please send classified notices to Bonnie Fritz.

For sale: 12 hd Barnes cows, \$650/hd, 2-7 yrs old. 1 Holt bull, \$650. Justin Pitts, 126 Evans Creek Road, Ellisville, MS 39437. 601-315-1492, ljfarm@megagate.com

Jokes from the field

There are lots of great jokes out there among you so please send me one (some). Otherwise, you may have to suffer more of these...



A man climbed over a fence into a field to pick some flowers. He noticed a bull nearby. Say, farmer. Is that Pineywoods bull safe? Well, he's a lot safer than you are right now!



I hear you take milk baths. That's right. Why? I can't find a Pineywoods cow tall enough for a shower!



If you had a gun and you were being chased by a Pineywoods bull and a mountain lion, which one would you shoot first? The mountain lion. You can always shoot the bull!



What do you call a group of Pineywoods cattle sent into orbit? The first herd shot round the world!